

## FREDERICK W. OLCOTT.

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JUNE 16, 1910.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. DAWSON, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, submitted the following

### REPORT.

[To accompany S. 7901.]

The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 7901) providing for the restoration and retirement of Frederick W. Olcott as a passed assistant surgeon in the navy, having had the same under consideration, report the same with the recommendation that the bill do pass.

In response to a letter written by the chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs to the Secretary of the Navy requesting the views and recommendations of the department upon a bill (H. R. 2934), an identical bill to the one under consideration, on May 20, 1910, the department wrote a letter stating fully the facts and circumstances attending the retirement of Doctor Olcott from the United States Navy, which letter is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY,  
*Washington, May 20, 1910.*

MY DEAR CONGRESSMAN: Referring to your letter of the 21st ultimo, inclosing a bill (H. R. 2934) providing for the restoration and retirement of Frederick W. Olcott, as a passed assistant surgeon in the navy, and requesting the views and recommendations of the department thereon, I have the honor to inform you that the Surgeon-General, upon reference of the matter to him, states as follows:

"In considering the history of the case of Frederick W. Olcott, from a knowledge of his career in the service and an intimate personal acquaintance with him before his entry, it appears to be probable that the conditions which existed when he was dismissed from the service and the habits he is said to have acquired were the result of, and not the cause of, his present mental condition.

"I was a student at college with Doctor Olcott about thirty years ago. We were in the same quiz classes together and graduated at the same time. As the result of a competitive examination, he was appointed on the staff of St. Francis Hospital, New York City, and served his internship there. In 1886, he entered the United States Navy as an assistant surgeon, being given a passing mark of 570; his general aptitude was put down as 83, which was considered a fair mark. Three years later the records show that he made a passing mark of 640, and his general aptitude was noted as 90; these marks being exceptionally high, especially in view of the fact of the rigid requirements at that time. Doctor Olcott led his class.

"During his college career and hospital internship, at a time when habits of dissipation are most often formed, he was unusually abstemious and attentive and conscientious in the performance of his duties and in the calls of his profession.

"During the period between his entry into the service and first examination for promotion his habits must have been good, his attention to his duties satisfactory and the high standing he took in his professional work shows that he must have been studious.

"In 1892, when Doctor Olcott was serving on the U. S. S. *Alert*, lying in the harbor of Yokohama, Japan, and I was attached to the naval hospital at that place, I was amazed at his changed mentality; he was secretive, only came to the hospital when ordered there officially, and never visited me. My recollection is that his shipmates mentioned to me his changed habits, carelessness of dress, and the lack of care of his quarters. I have not seen Doctor Olcott since that time.

"It is a fact that at present he is an inmate of the Government Hospital for the Insane, suffering from dementia præcox, with fixed delusions. If the mental condition for which he was dismissed from the service had been due to alcohol or other forms of dissipation, it is more than probable that with the withdrawal of these unfavorable influences, his mental balance would have been reestablished; on the contrary, he is permanently and hopelessly insane.

"Therefore in view of the foregoing I feel that I can conscientiously say that the mental derangement probably accounted for what was interpreted to be his moral obliquity.

"It would therefore seem that the provisions of the bill for the relief of Doctor Olcott are just."

The Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, to which bureau the matter has also been referred, reports as follows:

"The following is a record of service of Frederick W. Olcott, late passed assistant surgeon, U. S. Navy:

- "1887, January 21. Appointed an assistant surgeon.
- "1887, February 4. Commissioned an assistant surgeon from January 21.
- "1887, March 5. To the *Minnesota*; until December 31, 1888.
- "1888, February 11. Detached and to the *Atlanta*.
- "1889, January 12. Detached and to the *Vermont*.
- "1890, May 1. Detached 5th instant and to examination; then wait orders.
- "1890, September 1. Passed assistant surgeon. Approved May 22, 1891.
- "1890, September 16. To the *Alert* October 7.
- "1893, September 26. Detached and leave three months. (Detached October 7.)
- "1893, December 21. Leave extended one month.
- "1894, February 1. To the naval hospital, New York, 15th instant.
- "1894, March 3. Detached and to the *Richmond*. (Detached 6th and reported 9th of March.)
- "1894, May 21. Detached and to the *Constellation*. (Detached and reported May 28.)
- "1895, May 16. Detached and to the nautical school-ship *Enterprise*. (Detached 16th and reported 19th of May.)
- "1896, November 16. Detached 24th instant and to the *Independence*. (Detached November 27 and reported December 8.)
- "1897, January 12. Detached and to the naval station, Puget Sound. (Detached 9th and reported 18th of February.)
- "1897, March 5. Commissioned a passed assistant surgeon. (Act of February 13, 1897.)
- "1898, January 4. Detached and to the *Mohican*. (Detached 11th and reported 18th of January.)
- "1898, April 18. Detached home and report. (Detached April 19.)
- "1898, April 19. Found guilty by general court-martial of charges of 'drunkenness,' 'neglect of duty,' and 'violation of a lawful regulation issued by the Secretary of the Navy,' and sentenced 'to lose six (6) numbers in his grade and to be suspended from duty for one year on one-half shore duty pay.' Sentence approved this date.
- "1899, May 3. To the *Texas*. (Reported May 23.)
- "1899, June 12. Attained rank of lieutenant from March 3.
- "1900, January 16. Detached upon reporting of relief and to the naval recruiting rendezvous, Detroit, Mich. (Detached 23d and reported 28th of January.)
- "1900, February 26. Detached home and wait orders.
- "1900, April 11. To the naval recruiting rendezvous, Philadelphia.
- "1900, July 6. Detached and two months' sick leave. (Detached July 9.)
- "1900, September 10. To examination for promotion, New York, 20th instant.
- "1900, September 14. Found by naval examining board physically and mentally, but not morally or professionally qualified for promotion by reason of adverse reports

embraced in reports on fitness, special reports, and record of a general court-martial, charging drunkenness, improper use of drugs, unreliability, neglect of duty, and failure to pay bills; and discharged from the naval service.

"In view of the facts set forth in the second indorsement and the opinion of the Surgeon-General of the Navy given therein, this bureau believes there is grave doubt as to whether Surgeon Olcott's case was not one for medical treatment rather than for disciplinary measures, and therefore giving him the benefit of this doubt, recommends favorable action by the department upon the bill for his relief."

Although this department has on former occasions, viz, by letter of May 11, 1908, to the chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs, United States Senate, and by that of December 30, 1908, to the chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs, House of Representatives, recommended adversely to this legislation, yet, in view of the opinions and recommendations quoted above, it now informs you that it believes the bill should be favorably reported and such action is suggested.

Faithfully yours,

G. v. L. MEYER.

The CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE ON NAVAL AFFAIRS,  
*House of Representatives.*

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